

## Message Text

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FM SECSTATE WASHDC

TO AMEMBASSY ALGIERS PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY RABAT PRIORITY

INFO AMEMBASSY MOSCOW PRIORITY

S E C R E T STATE 014196

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: MO,AG,US,PFOR,MOPS,MASS

SUBJECT: INR ANALYSIS OF POSSIBLE MOROCCAN-ALGERIAN CONFLICT

REFS: A) RABAT 5961; B) ALGIERS 0064

FOR AMBASSADORS NEUMANN AND PARKER FROM SAUNDERS

1. YOUR ANALYSES REF A AND B HAVE GIVEN US FOOD FOR THOUGHT. WE HAVE JUST COMPLETED AN INTERAGENCY MEMORANDUM CONSIDERING THE POTENTIAL FOR CONFLICT IN THE SAHARA DISPUTE OVER THE NEXT 6 MONTHS (MAJOR JUDGMENTS GIVEN BELOW). WE WOULD WELCOME YOUR REACTIONS TO IT AS WE PREPARE FOR FOLLOW-ON EFFORTS.

2. WE ARE NEXT PLANNING AN INR TREATMENT OF THE POSSIBILITY THAT A MOROCCAN-ALGERIAN CONFRONTATION MAY CONTINUE OVER THE NEXT 2-3 YEARS. IN THIS CONNECTION, WE WOULD

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APPRECIATE YOUR THOUGHTS--IF POSSIBLE BY JANUARY 26--ON

THE FOLLOWING: ASSUMING THE BOUMEDIENE REGIME HAS GIVEN UP ON "PEACEFUL CO-EXISTENCE" WITH THE MOROCCAN MONARCHY, WHAT PROSPECTS DO YOU SEE FOR MOROCCAN-ALGERIAN RELATIONS OVER THE NEXT SEVERAL YEARS? WHAT ARE THE POSSIBLE VARIETIES OF AN ANTAGONISTIC RELATIONSHIP SHORT OF WAR?

IF A WAR DID COME, WHAT MIGHT IT LOOK LIKE? HOW WOULD THE US BE AFFECTED BY A LONGER-TERM MOROCCAN-ALGERIAN CONFRONTATION SHORT OF WAR? HOW WOULD WE BE AFFECTED BY A WAR? WHAT IS THE LIKELIHOOD THAT YOUR CLIENTS WOULD CALL FOR OR WELCOME SOVIET INVOLVEMENT? WHAT KIND OF HELP IF ANY MIGHT BE REQUESTED?

3. FOLLOWING ARE THE MAJOR JUDGMENTS OF THE INTERAGENCY MEMORANDUM "SPANISH SAHARA: POTENTIAL FOR CONFLICT" (FULL TEXT WAS POUCHED TO RABAT AND ALGIERS JANUARY 19):

ALTHOUGH WE CANNOT RULE OUT THE POSSIBILITY THAT ALGERIA WOULD ACQUIESCE IN A MOROCCAN-MAURITANIAN TAKEOVER OF THE SAHARA, WE DO NOT BELIEVE THAT BOUMEDIENE WILL SOON ABANDON THE POLISARIO FRONT, A NATIONAL LIBERATION MOVEMENT HEAVILY DEPENDENT ON ALGERIAN SUPPORT. NOR DO WE BELIEVE THAT HASSAN WILL MAKE ANY MOVES WHICH WOULD MAKE AGREEMENT POSSIBLE BETWEEN ALGIERS AND RABAT. THE MOST LIKELY SITUATION WILL THEREFORE BE CONTINUATION OF THE PRESENT GUERRILLA WARFARE BETWEEN THE ALGERIAN-BACKED POLISARIO FRONT AND MOROCCAN-MAURITANIAN FORCES.

WE BELIEVE THAT A DELIBERATELY INITIATED WAR BETWEEN MOROCCO AND ALGERIA OVER CONTROL OF SPANISH SAHARA IS UNLIKELY OVER THE NEXT SIX MONTHS. DURING THIS TIME PERIOD, NEITHER PARTY WILL SEE THE DIPLOMATIC AND MILITARY SITUATION AS SO HOPELESS AS TO REQUIRE LARGE-SCALE MILITARY ACTION AGAINST THE OTHER SIDE.

WAR BY MISCALCULATION IS ALSO UNLIKELY. IF IT SHOULD OCCUR, ITS MOST PROBABLE STIMULUS WOULD BE A SUBSTANTIAL INCREASE IN GUERRILLA OPERATIONS AGAINST MOROCCAN AND MAURITANIAN FORCES BY THE POLISARIO FRONT. BUT THE MILITARY LIMITATIONS OF THE SAHARAN TERRAIN MAKE IT UNLIKELY

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THAT CONFLICT IN THIS REGION COULD REACH DANGEROUS PROPORTIONS OVER A PERIOD AS SHORT AS THE NEXT SIX MONTHS.

WE CANNOT YET JUDGE WHETHER ALGERIA WILL SEEK A MAJOR INCREASE IN POLISARIO GUERRILLA OPERATIONS OR CONTINUE THEM AT THE PRESENT INCONCLUSIVE LEVELS. ALGIERS WOULD BE MORE LIKELY TO SUPPORT GREATER POLISARIO ACTIVITY IF MOROCCO UNDERTOOK MILITARY MOVES SUCH AS:

- A FURTHER MILITARY BUILDUP IN AREAS BORDERING ALGERIA;
- SIGNIFICANT NEW ARMS PURCHASES FROM THE US; OR PARTICULARLY
- A MOROCCAN EFFORT TO DESTROY OPPOSITION IN THE ENTIRE SAHARAN TERRITORY.

CONTINUING THE PRESENT LEVEL OF GUERRILLA OPERATIONS WOULD BOLSTER ALGERIA'S CLAIM THAT IT SUPPORTS NATIONAL LIBERATION STRUGGLES. IT WOULD ALSO TIE DOWN A LARGE NUMBER OF MOROCCAN TROOPS AT A RELATIVELY SMALL COST TO ALGERIA. WE CANNOT YET JUDGE WHAT IMPACT THIS MIGHT HAVE ON MOROCCO'S INTERNAL SITUATION.

4. FOR MOSCOW: WE WOULD WELCOME ANY COMMENTS YOU MIGHT WISH TO MAKE FROM YOUR PERSPECTIVE.

5. THIS MESSAGE CLEARED WITH NEA.

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